

Communication Matters

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Free Publication: Strategies for CRPs serving Deaf/HH people

Strategies for Community Rehabilitation Programs: To Serve Consumers who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late Deafened or Deafblind is a new book that provides guidance for administrators and service delivery staff. The document includes business practices, service issues, and resources. It also includes a general introduction to deafness and communication.

This resource is FREE, so be sure share it with your community partners! Find it on the web at:

www.mcpc.org/crp_resources.asp

Where Can I Learn Sign Language?

It's a common question. Perhaps a family member or co-worker is deaf, and it would be great to be able to communicate better. Or perhaps you work as a counselor, or in a school where sign language would come in handy. There are several resources for learning American Sign Language (ASL), depending on your needs and location. These will be described below. But first, the second most common question is:

How long does it take to learn sign language?

How long did it take you to learn to talk fluently? For most, it takes 2, 3 or even 4 years. It takes adults longer than children to learn a new language. So although you can learn basic sign communication skills in a year or so, don't expect to be fluent for 2 to 4 years. The more you associate with people who sign, the faster you will learn the language. Begin learning now and very soon you will be having conversations in this beautiful and expressive language.

Where to take Sign Language Classes

Many community colleges, and some universities, offer ASL classes for college credit. Some conduct these classes as part of another program (special education or audiology), others have Interpreter Training Programs.

Not everyone needs interpreter training. These programs teach the unique skills required of people who facilitate communication between people who speak two different languages. Not everyone needs these skills to communicate in ASL. Likewise, just because a person can sign, doesn't mean they have the skills required to interpret.

Some colleges offer community education programs, with low-cost non-credit courses. Many of these programs offer beginning sign language classes. Check with a college near you.

Agencies that serve deaf and hard of hearing people sometimes offer sign language classes to the community.

If you cannot find an existing class, request that a deaf person you know offer a class. Inviting a deaf employee to teach ASL to co-workers is a great way to build rapport and improve communication!

Finally, online ASL classes are springing up on the web. It's always better to learn with a live person, but if not possible, this is an option.

For a listing of ASL classes in Michigan and on the web see E-Michigan Deaf & Hard of Hearing People:

www.michdhh.org/asl_deaf_culture/asl_training.html

Information or news related to Deaf or Hard of Hearing services may be forwarded to Julie Eckhardt at jewel@chartermi.net. Views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily the views of Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth-Rehabilitation Services.

Communication Matters is available on the web at www.michigan.gov/mrs and on the E-Learn Deaf & Hard of Hearing Resource Center.

Deafblindness Training Extends Deadline

June 6 - 24, 2005

Northern Illinois University

DeKalb, Illinois

Application Deadline: March 15

The Certificate Training in Deafblindness program at Northern Illinois University provides comprehensive continuing education for rehabilitation personnel who have responsibility for delivering quality services to persons who are deaf-blind. Targeted participants include practicing rehabilitation professionals who are knowledgeable and experienced in providing rehabilitation services to persons who are either deaf or blind but who lack expertise in applying these skills to persons who are deaf-blind. It is intended to significantly impact the delivery of rehabilitation services to persons who are deaf-blind by providing rehabilitation personnel who are knowledgeable concerning the unique considerations of the combined disabilities of deafness and blindness and who are, therefore, better able to provide quality and accessible services. Training consists of an intensive three-week on-campus module at Northern Illinois University followed by a distance learning component completed during the eleven months following the on-campus workshop. Fifteen graduate credits are awarded upon completion of the program.

This training is fully funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration.

The training is at no cost to accepted trainees. Includes tuition and fees, travel, lodging, and per diem.

Requires a commitment of 3 weeks on campus.

For more information, contact:

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Young Scholars Program

This summer, Gallaudet University is offering a wonderful opportunity for talented and gifted deaf and hard of hearing students to participate in the Young Scholar's Program (YSP). The purpose of YSP is to challenge students intellectually, introduce them to a university setting that supports direct communication, and supports them in making a decision about their choices of university, academic major, and career opportunities. For more information see:

<http://clast.gallaudet.edu/summer/YSP/>

Summer Bridge Program

The Gallaudet University Bridge Program is a four-week live-in learning program that consists of academic, social and cultural activities designed to prepare incoming first year students for the demands of university life.

For more info see:

fye.gallaudet.edu

The New Signers Program (NSP)

This program offers freshmen and transfer students who possess little or no skill in signing a four-week immersion program in American Sign Language starting July 21 to August 19, 2004. The NSP aims to teach new students basic signing skills by the beginning of fall classes to help them communicate easily with other Gallaudet students, staff and faculty and also make the best use of campus services.

To learn more see:

nso.gallaudet.edu

NTID ANNOUNCES MAJOR CHANGES

ROCHESTER, N.Y., Feb. 18—The National Technical Institute for the Deaf, a college of Rochester Institute of Technology, has announced a new plan that reflects bold and significant changes with its academic programs, access services and outreach efforts to more closely align with deaf and hard-of-hearing students' needs.

“We will build on our excellent track record of assisting qualified students to graduate from the other colleges of RIT at rates comparable to or better than their hearing peers,” said Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, RIT vice president and CEO/Dean of NTID. “We will add more transfer programs similar to ‘2 + 2’ or ‘2 + 3’ programs in broad areas that match RIT offerings to prepare students for careers in business, computer technology, engineering, science, imaging, and many other fields.”

NTID will also develop formal referral programs for students who want to come to NTID but who aren't yet academically ready. Throughout the next few years, NTID will work closely with selected community colleges to develop college-readiness programs that emphasize reading and writing, math, career awareness and interpersonal growth.

Effective immediately, access services have been expanded to meet the changing needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing students enrolled in one of the other seven colleges of RIT.

Students who know sign language and can benefit from sign language transliteration, notetaking, and/or assistive listening systems as access accommodations can request them. For those students taking courses in the other RIT colleges who do not benefit from sign language transliteration services, an alternative accommodation will be provided and will be based on an individual assessment of student need and on consideration of that need in relationship to the educational context. For most of these students, a text-based transliteration service, such as C-Print, will be provided.

To address these changing and growing needs, NTID will significantly expand C-print resources, as well as add more interpreters.

“In order to accomplish this goal, we will be significantly increasing access services, human resources, investing in new technology and conducting research on the effectiveness of various access services,” Hurwitz said. “We recognize that each student is an individual with unique needs. As hearing aid technology continues to improve, in addition to the increasing use of cochlear implants, students are using their hearing more than they ever have in the past, which changes their needs for support.”

Last, but not the least, NTID will develop a formal educational outreach consortium to share its expertise with others to improve deaf and hard-of-hearing people's education and career development.

This consortium will be established initially to strengthen skill levels among students in grades 7-11, especially underrepresented and female students. Eventually, the consortium will serve all deaf and hard-of-hearing students and professionals, and those who work with them.

“Educators and employers around the world have looked to NTID as a model for technical education programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing students,” said Hurwitz. “The knowledge we've acquired from our years of extensive research and experience is unprecedented, and it's our pleasure to share this information more widely.”

These changes are the result of more than a year's work of processing countless ideas, thoughts, and concerns from faculty, staff, students, alumni and members of NTID's National Advisory Group. After thorough review and analysis, those initial thoughts resulted in the Strategic Vision 2010, which now serves as the blueprint for NTID's future.

The first and largest technological college in the world for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, NTID, one of eight colleges within RIT, offers educational programs and access services to the 1,100 students from around the world who study, live and socialize with more than 14,000 hearing students on RIT's Rochester, NY campus.

Web address: www.rit.edu/NTID